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NOAA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES SUBJECT OF NEW COUSTEAU FILM AIRING ON PBS STATIONS NATIONWIDE

America's Underwater Treasures Premieres Sept. 20

Television viewers nationwide will have the opportunity to tour NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System without getting their feet wet Sept. 20 and 27 when the Public Broadcasting System airs a new two-part documentary produced by PBS station KQED and Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society. The film, *America's Underwater Treasures*, highlights the natural and cultural resources of each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries managed by the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program.

"America's national marine sanctuaries are special places that embrace part of our collective riches as a nation," said retired Navy vice admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Within the protected waters of national marine sanctuaries, whales breed and raise their young, coral colonies flourish, and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history."

In the two-part film which premieres on Wednesday, Sept. 20, and concludes on Wednesday, Sept. 27, Cousteau and his dive team introduce viewers to a variety marine life, habitats and historic shipwrecks encompassed by national marine sanctuaries and to the researchers and resource managers who are working every day to study and protect them.

"Thanks to PBS, Jean-Michel Cousteau and his team, viewers around the nation will experience the thrill of exploring national marine sanctuaries and discover what makes each one unique and special," said Daniel J. Basta, director of the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program. "National marine sanctuaries truly are America's ocean and Great Lakes treasures, representing many things to many people, from living laboratories and outdoor classrooms to cherished recreational spots visited and valued by millions of Americans."

The National Marine Sanctuary System has matured from a single sanctuary, designated in 1975, to 14 protected areas, including the marine waters of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument established in June 2006 by President George W. Bush. Sanctuary habitats include coral and rocky reefs, kelp forests, whale migration corridors, deep-sea canyons and underwater archaeological sites, including the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*. Ranging in size from one to more than 5,300 square miles, sanctuaries are located off the coasts of American Samoa, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington.

The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program, which manages the sanctuary system, seeks to increase public awareness of America's marine resources and maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. In all, the program manages 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

"America's Underwater Treasures" was sponsored, in part, by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, a private, non-profit organization created to assist the NOAA National

Marine Sanctuary Program with education and outreach efforts to preserve, protect and promote meaningful opportunities for public interaction with the nation's marine sanctuaries.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. The agency is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts, and protects.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

America's Underwater Treasurers: <http://www.pbs.org/oceanadventures>